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Viewing cable 06SANSALVADOR1080, TOPICS REGARDING PRESIDENT ELIAS ANTONIO SACA (EL SALVADOR)

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Discussing cables

If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g.

#06SANSALVADOR1080.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06SANSALVADOR1080	2006-04-25 19:49	2011-08-30 01:44	SECRET//NOFORN	Embassy San Salvador

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.wikileaks.elfaro.net/es/201106/notas/4121/>

VZCZCXYZ0002
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSN #1080/01 1151949
ZNY SSSSS ZZH
P 251949Z APR 06
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2102

S E C R E T SAN SALVADOR 001080

SIPDIS

NOFORN
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E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/26/2026
TAGS: [PINR](#) [ES](#)
SUBJECT: TOPICS REGARDING PRESIDENT ELIAS ANTONIO SACA (EL SALVADOR)

REF: STATE 047342

Classified By: Amb. H. Douglas Barclay. Reasons 1.4 (b,d).

¶1. (S/NF) This cable is a response to the questions posed in reftel.

¶2. (C) How does Saca react to disappointments? Can he deal with them internally, or does he lash out at others? How does Saca rationalize his own failures or those of his subordinates? Does he tolerate mistakes?

Saca demonstrates he has great energy, both in public and private, and has given no observable indication that he has trouble dealing with stress. Saca was very disappointed that his ARENA Party did not do as well as he had expected in the March 12 national elections, and, according to some of his closest friends and family members, was somewhat shaken that his personal popularity was not enough to pull the party towards greater electoral results. Nonetheless, Saca seems to have bounced back fairly quickly and is in the process of re-energizing his administration. Although there was a fair amount of recrimination from Saca towards those advisers he considered partly responsible for the electoral results, several close advisers report that Saca was not demeaning or disrespectful towards those individuals. On the contrary, several of Saca's closest friends characterize him as too tolerant of incompetence among his inner circle.

¶3. (C) How does Saca react to criticism from those closest to him as well as from outside observers such as the press?

Few of Saca's closest advisers are willing to criticize him directly, perhaps more for lack of courage and conviction than because of expected negative repercussions. Those few who do criticize him are his two older uncles and a handful of hired consultants outside the government. Saca respects the advice of these individuals and has taken harsh criticism from them in the past. Saca handles even the strongest criticism from the press with cool professionalism.

¶4. (C) How easily does Saca change his opinion of other people, organizations, or important issues? Does he hold grudges?

Saca is not known to hold grudges, but has changed his view of some people in his government over time, especially when he feels they are not fully committed to him or his ARENA Party. Saca is especially wary of people he feels are too sympathetic to the left, especially the FMLN.

¶5. (C) How far does Saca take his suspicions of the FMLN and does he view other things in a similarly negative or paranoid light? How does he view opponents or competitors? Does he demonstrate the ability to show empathy toward them or does he view them as entirely malevolent?

Saca is politically savvy and likes to use the FMLN as his "whipping boy," especially when dealing with USG counterparts. Moreover, Saca has a visceral dislike for communism (FMLN, Castro, Chavez), which he blames for having destroyed the country's infrastructure and overall economy during the war years. Saca is proud to say that he smokes only Padron cigars, made by Miami Cubans, and would never smoke a Cohiba. He also vows never to establish formal relations with Cuba so long as Castro is in power. Saca expresses justifiable concern over Chavez's interference in El Salvador's internal affairs, and the threat of a Chavez-Castro-Ortega-FMLN axis in this sub-region. Saca's arguments are well reasoned and not based on paranoia. Saca is a masterful politician, and deals with ease with adversaries from all the political parties, including FMLN members in the National Assembly.

¶6. (C) Does Saca easily get upset or have mood swings? If prone to blowing up, what is most likely to set him off and who is most effective at calming him down?

According to Saca's closest friends and family members, Saca is the same easygoing person in private that he portrays in public. Embassy dealings with Saca generally corroborate that view. However, during the Summit of the Americas in Mar

del Plata in early November 2005, Saca reportedly blew up at Salvadoran Foreign Minister Francisco Lainez because Saca was to be seated next to President Bush at the formal dinner, and the Argentines had apparently rearranged the seating so that Saca was placed several seats away from President Bush. Lainez reportedly told USG interlocutors that Saca was beside himself and demanded that Lainez schedule a one-on-one meeting with President Bush.

17. (C) What is his family life like? Does Saca make time to relax or divert himself from his political life?

Saca seems to focus all of his attention on his political career and seems to spend little time with his wife or two sons. However, Saca takes family vacations during the Christmas and Easter holidays. During the Christmas vacation, Saca frequently enjoys taking his wife and two sons to California, and spends the time with his two Amcit brothers and their families. During Easter, Saca and his family normally stay at a family beach house in El Salvador. During these holidays, Saca largely isolates himself from his advisers and focuses on his family. Other than his wife and children, Saca's closest family members are his wife's siblings, in-laws, and his two elder uncles, who often serve as surrogate father figures.

18. (C) Does Saca have problems with concentration, appear fatigued or have trouble sleeping?

Embassy is not aware of Saca having problems with concentration. In fact, Saca has always been extremely sharp during meetings with USG officials. Embassy is not aware of Saca's sleeping patterns.

19. (C) Recent photos suggest Saca has become significantly heavier. We are interested in information on his diet as well as insights into any substances Saca might be taking (including medications, illegal narcotics, herbal remedies, etc.)

Embassy is not aware of Saca using any of the above substances. Likewise, Saca is not a regular alcohol drinker, and will rarely have a straight, aged tequila, his drink of preference on those occasions. Saca does worry about his weight, and was on some type of regular diet and exercise plan during his presidential election campaign. Clearly, Saca is not following a diet or exercise regimen, and does like to eat.
Barclay